

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

071812Z Nov 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 007599

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2015

TAGS: PHUM PGOV KISL FR

SUBJECT: RAMPAGE IN FRANCE CONTINUES FOR 11TH DAY

REF: A. PARIS 7525

1B. PARIS POINTS FOR NOVEMBER 7 AND PREVIOUS
(EMBASSY SIPRNET SITE)

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Notwithstanding massive deployments of police and President Jacques Chirac's assurances that "the absolute priority is to reestablish security and public order," violent unrest in France intensified through the weekend, with November 6 marking the eleventh night of arson and clashes between bands of youths and police. The incidents of destruction and confrontation with police spread over the past eleven days beyond Paris to other major cities in France. Over the weekend, for the first time, several cars were burned close to the center of Paris. More than 1,400 vehicles were attacked throughout France during the latest night of violence, and 395 individuals were detained. A 13-month-old baby was hospitalized after the bus she was in was struck by rocks, and a 61-year-old man died of injuries he sustained the night of November 4 in what may be the first instance of a death related to the violence. Birdshot was fired at police south of Paris, hospitalizing two with non life-threatening injuries. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin is expected to announce GoF proposals in a nationally televised appearance on the evening of November 7.
End Summary.

Chirac Vows to Restore Order...

12. (SBU) In his televised remarks after meeting with key ministers Sunday evening, Chirac pledged that "the law should have the final say, and the Republic is determined to be stronger than those who want to spread violence and fear. The perpetrators will be apprehended, judged, and punished." Chirac also indicated that he would seek to address the suspected root causes of the violence -- including rampant unemployment among young people in the affected immigrant communities. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin is expected to present his proposals in a nationally televised appearance on the evening of November 7. He has promised "concrete propositions" to suppress the rioting and address the unemployment and hopelessness of youth in France's suburbs. Villepin announced that the government has already acted to accelerate judicial procedures for those caught rioting, and individuals detained can be presented before the courts immediately.

... As Violence Spreads

13. (SBU) Over the weekend, the unrest spilled from the suburbs north and east of Paris to the city proper, with incidents being reported in 274 French communities. On the night of Saturday, November 5, a car was set ablaze near the Place de la Republique, close to central Paris and on the outskirts of the trendy Marais neighborhood. Meanwhile, the latest violence continued to extend throughout France, with cities such as Toulouse, Marseille, Cannes, Nice, Lille, and Strasbourg all reporting similar incidents.

Muslim Groups Try to Quell Unrest

14. (SBU) In addition to governmental calls for calm, numerous community and religious groups have also appealed for an end to the violence. The fundamentalist Union for Islamic Organizations in France (UOIF) issued a fatwa November 6 stating, "It is not acceptable to express feelings of desperation through damaging public properties and carrying out arson... Under Islam, one cannot get one's rights at the expense of others." President of the French Council for the Muslim Faith Dalil Boubakeur met with French authorities to discuss the spreading problem. Media reports indicate that members of the Tabligh sect of Islam and an organization known as the Young Muslims of France (JMF) have circulated among rioting youths to try to play a mediating role.

Injuries and the Possibility of First Riot-Related Death

15. (SBU) Although the violence has typically targeted vehicles and buildings, a number of injuries have been reported. On November 2, a handicapped woman suffered severe

burns when the bus she was in was set afire. Overnight in the eastern city of Colombe, a 13-month-old was hospitalized when a bus was attacked by rock-wielding youths. Since the violence began, 77 police and 31 firemen have been injured. Ten police were hurt in the town of Grigny (approximately 20 miles south of Paris) where police were attacked by some 200 rioters and fired upon with birdshot. Two police officers were hospitalized, but their injuries were not considered life-threatening. On November 7, 61-year-old Jean-Jacques Le Chenadec succumbed to injuries he sustained three days earlier when he and a neighbor were attacked by an unknown assailant. Exact details are unclear, but according to the other victim, who suffered less serious injuries, the two men were talking at approximately 10:00 p.m. Friday night in a neighborhood where unrest had occurred when an individual approached and demanded to know what they were discussing. When they responded "our cars," the individual began punching them, causing Chenadec to fall back and hit his head. The assailant is being sought. The Deputy Mayor of Stains has asked for "great prudence" in the matter, adding, "The association of these events with the recent violence in the neighborhood is not established. We must wait for the investigation."

Comment

16. (C) The intensity of the destructive activity and the increase in the number of areas affected pose a continuing problem for the French government. The numerous, small bands of young men that are perpetuating the violence are difficult to track and detain. The government, while doing its utmost to quell the violence through targeted deployment of police and rapid reaction, is also being careful to respond in a restrained way. One "mistake" or "overreaction" by police that kills or severely injures a minority youth could trigger a wave of much less controllable violence. The deliberate attacks against police in Grigny is particularly disturbing, as it represents a shift in targets from buildings and vehicles to authority figures themselves. Additionally, the use of firearms against police raises the likelihood of a more violent response from authorities. As it currently stands, it may take a delicate balance of increased police presence, governmental proposals, and the efforts of community leaders to bring an end to the violence.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>
Stapleton